United Nations A/57/276

General Assembly

Distr.: General
17 September 2002

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Item 120 of the provisional agenda*
Human resources management

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001 (sect. VII, para. 10), in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide an analytical and thorough report on the establishment of a robust monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management, for the "monitoring of all relevant activities in the Secretariat regardless of the source of funding". The report contains an account of current human resources management monitoring activities, information regarding the comprehensive monitoring initiatives under development and the refocusing of certain functions in the Office of Human Resources Management.

* A/57/190.

** The submission of the present report was delayed in order to include all relevant information.

02-51248 (E) 101002

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–5	3
II.	Definition	6	3
III.	Guiding principles	7	4
IV.	State of monitoring of human resources management in the Secretariat	8–9	4
V.	Building a more comprehensive monitoring system in the Office of Human Resources Management	10–17	7
	A. Focus	10–15	7
	B. Methodology	16	8
	C. Mechanisms and tools	17	10
VI.	Implementation	18–19	11
VII.	Conclusion	20–21	11
Annex			
	Precis of monitoring decisions of the General Assembly		12

I. Introduction

1. In his programme for reform (A/51/950), the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly that he had initiated a comprehensive programme to streamline the central administration of the Organization. The focus of this effort involved introducing changes and simplifying administrative processes, in particular those relating to human resources management. Its purpose, in part, was to define a more strategic policy, advisory and monitoring role for the Office of Human Resources Management.

2. An improved monitoring capacity for the Office of Human Resources Management will provide vital support to the Secretary-General's strategic management approach, which focuses on achieving better results and greater impact in the work programme of the Organization. Improved monitoring will underpin and promote the Secretary-General's goal of empowering managers in the human resources area by ensuring effective accountability.

3. The General Assembly has paid close attention to the issue of monitoring. An account of its recent decisions on this subject is provided in the annex to the present report.

4. In the present report, the Secretary-General outlines a plan to build increased capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management to improve its effectiveness in monitoring human resource management activities. It also contains an account of the most relevant mechanisms of accountability and the internal monitoring and control procedures that have already been established in support of the Secretary-General's reform programme overall, and in particular of human resource management reform.

5. The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001 (sect. VII, para. 10), in which the Assembly decided "to further consider the issue of a robust monitoring capacity in the Office for Human Resources Management for the monitoring of all relevant activities in the Secretariat, regardless of their source of funding". The Assembly further requested "the Secretary-General to provide an analytical and thorough report thereon to the General Assembly".

II. Definition

6. As the Organization moves towards a results-based culture, monitoring, an essential function of modern management is becoming an integral part of all activities. It is the process of tracking and verifying, on an ongoing basis, a number of pre-selected, well-defined outputs and results, together with the processes through which those results have been obtained, with the aim of securing current, valid and relevant information on work in progress in order to ensure that:

(a) Established standards, norms and specifications are respected;

(b) Regulations, rules, policies and procedures are adhered to;

(c) Performance targets are met;

(d) Support and guidance is given where required;

(e) Best practices are shared throughout the Organization.

III. Guiding principles

7. As stated by the Secretary-General in his report on human resources reform to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly (A/55/253), mechanisms of accountability and monitoring are an integral part of all activities related to human resources management. As such, a comprehensive, integrated monitoring system must be based on the following guiding principles:

(a) Monitoring is a management support mechanism, with the purpose of providing assistance to heads of departments and offices in carrying out their responsibilities, under their delegated authority. Monitoring aims to improve management practices and achieve better results through, inter alia, the provision of relevant management information, early warning signals and guidance, which would allow for remedial action wherever possible;

(b) Monitoring must be a partner-based endeavour, in which the Office of Human Resources Management assists and supports heads of departments and offices, and line managers. Its effectiveness also requires coordination with oversight bodies and with offices that have related management advisory and consultative functions within the United Nations;

(c) Monitoring must be a proactive and ongoing process;

(d) Monitoring must be incorporated into all relevant aspects of human resource management activities in order to elicit information on: achievements or lack thereof; adherence to standards, norms and specifications; and compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures;

(e) Monitoring must follow clearly defined methodologies and must utilize and be supported by appropriate mechanisms and tools. Useful, easily available and current information, data and reports depend on the support of a strong information technology capacity;

(f) Effective monitoring requires dedicated resources, supported by a specialized team of staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience, operating within the context of a clearly defined programme of work.

IV. State of monitoring of human resources management in the Secretariat

8. Accountability is a key consideration in designing every aspect of the Secretary-General's reform. In support of the initiatives the Secretary-General has already taken in management reform, and as part of the structure of the building blocks for human resources management improvements, significant monitoring is already taking place, including: executive mechanisms at the level of the Secretary-General and his heads of departments and offices, as well as under the authority of the Department of Management and the Office of Human Resources Management:

(a) **Programme management plans** — Annual performance compacts between the Secretary-General and his programme managers set out commitments to achieve measurable goals with regard to programme and management objectives, including in human resources management. The Secretary-General provides guidance and feedback to programme managers on the achievements of the previous year and the setting of new objectives for the coming year;

(b) **Monitoring of human resources action plans** — Each department and office agrees with the Office of Human Resources Management on a human resources action plan that records measurable targets in key areas such as vacancy levels, geographic distribution, gender balance, mobility, performance management, staff development and other aspects of human resources management. In this manner, the Office of Human Resources Management monitors the extent to which each department and office is meeting organizational human resources management objectives and facilitates review of the exercise of management authority, including proper application of regulations, rules, policies and procedures. These plans are formally monitored twice annually;

(c) **Key item management reporting system** — The Management Policy Office of the Department of Management has developed a system of management performance indicators, using data from the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS). The system provides programme managers with online information with which to monitor actions in the field of human resources management, as well as other management areas, and alerts them to variances from pre-set goals, timelines or delivery targets. The present coverage of Secretariat activities is limited, but there are plans to increase its scope and the comprehensiveness of its coverage;

(d) **Monitoring of the Performance Appraisal System** — The Performance Appraisal System (PAS) requires managers to specify staff performance expectations and to monitor them on a regular basis. The Office of Human Resources Management has established a system to monitor PAS compliance and ratings distribution by department and office, based on the collection and analysis of statistics. This information is provided, inter alia, to the Steering Committee on Reform and Management for the annual review of Organization-wide compliance as well as for human resources action planning meetings with department heads. As part of PAS monitoring, PAS Management Review and Joint Monitoring Committees throughout the Secretariat provide information to the Office of Human Resources Management. In addition, the Office provides an annual composite report to the Global Joint Monitoring Committee, which submits it to the Secretary-General through the Staff-Management Consultative Committee. The Secretary-General's annual performance compacts with his programme managers also contain PAS implementation data;

(e) **Monitoring of staff development programmes** — Staff development programmes are intended to assist staff to enhance existing skills and to acquire new ones as well as to mainstream the new management culture. The Office of Human Resources Management has developed a training and learning policy that ensures that staff development needs are addressed through a combination of centrally coordinated programmes aimed at building core and managerial competencies and promoting a shared organizational culture and shared values, with decentralized funding to address specific technical and substantive needs. In accordance with

administrative instruction ST/AI/1997/4, departments and offices conduct annual needs assessments to identify training requirements and submit training plans that are the basis of the allocation of decentralized funds. The Office of Human Resources Management closely monitors implementation of these plans through review of Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) financial reports on training funds and through contacts and interviews with departments and offices, which submit annual reports on the use of funds, including on the type and impact of training undertaken. In subsequent years, the Office of Human Resources Management reviews and evaluates these reports as part of the process of allocating funds. Centrally coordinated programmes are monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis and are adjusted as required to ensure that they continue to meet the priority development needs of the Organization. Comprehensive annual staff development activity reports are provided to heads of departments and offices on participation of staff in training and learning activities, with statistics disaggregated by duty station, department, category and gender;

(f) **Monitoring of compensation issues** — The Office of Human Resources Management has responsibility for ongoing monitoring of the conditions of service of staff. The Office conducts salary surveys for General Service and related category staff in New York and in the field, and reviews comprehensive salary surveys conducted by specialists from the various agencies. The monitoring mechanism employed is the Salary Steering Committee, headed by the Office of Human Resources Management, which approves all non-Headquarters salary surveys and reviews their conformity to the methodology established by the International Civil Service Commission. For field missions, the Office of Human Resources Management ensures appropriate conditions of service by setting, monitoring and updating mission subsistence allowance rates, and by providing guidelines and authoritative advice to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the conditions of service of staff it administers;

(g) **Monitoring of policies, guidelines and practices** — Automated IMIS monitoring reports track compliance with human resource policies, guidelines and practices. The reports include a recruitment tracking system and an automated time and attendance recording procedure. IMIS contains an automated staff entitlements processing mechanism, but the information required is gathered in paper form. An alternative automated tool for this data gathering activity is currently under development;

(h) **Monitoring of human resources management in field missions** — Field missions under the responsibility and authority of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will be monitored in the framework of the delegation of authority for human resources management, utilizing, inter alia, the relevant monitoring mechanisms indicated above. The Office of Human Resources Management is working with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at Headquarters, in particular with the Office of Mission Support, to develop the overall monitoring strategy and plans for field missions;

(i) **Monitoring of management irregularities in the area of human resources management** — The Secretary-General, in his report on management irregularities causing financial losses to the Organization (A/54/793), outlined procedures for determining gross negligence and for the effective implementation of staff rule 112.3 for financial recovery. The report also set out measures to establish a

more effective accountability mechanism and to improve internal control. In its resolution 55/258, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take urgent measures to recover financial losses caused to the Organization by wrongful actions or gross negligence of senior officials of the United Nations. Consultations are under way between the Office of Human Resources Management, the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts and the Office of Legal Affairs on the new administrative instruction, prior to the consultation process with staff mandated by the Staff Rules;

(j) **Accountability Panel** — The Panel was established in October 2000 to ensure that the Secretariat monitors and addresses the findings of its oversight review bodies from a systemic perspective and to reinforce other accountability mechanisms.

9. Bearing in mind the guiding principles outlined in paragraph 7 above, and since human resources management monitoring is a partner-based endeavour, the Office of Human Resources Management not only participates in management reviews of departments and offices by the Department of Management but also coordinates with the Office for Internal Oversight Services, the United Nations Board of Auditors and the Joint Inspection Unit. These oversight bodies provide valuable feedback and guidance on various management issues. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management works closely with other offices, such as the Management Policy Office of the Department of Management, to ensure that monitoring and management advisory services in the Secretariat are integrated and of the highest calibre.

V. Building a more comprehensive monitoring system in the Office of Human Resources Management

A. Focus

10. As defined in paragraph 6 above, the aim of the monitoring activities of the Office of Human Resources Management will be to ensure that established standards, norms and specifications are respected, regulations, rules, policies and procedures adhered to, performance targets met, support and guidance given where required, and best practices vetted, developed and promoted. The human resources reform proposals of the Secretary-General (see A/55/253) were predicated on a strong central role for the Office of Human Resources Management. In this regard, the Secretary-General welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to further consider the issue of improving the monitoring capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management. A more comprehensive monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management will enable it to provide significant support to the departments and offices in discharging the authority delegated to them in the area of human resource management, as part of the management reform of the Organization.

11. The human resources management monitoring activities under development will be comprehensive, integrated, systematic and ongoing. Monitoring, therefore, must become a shared responsibility and an integral part of the functions of all managers. However, as specified in General Assembly resolution 55/258, the Office of Human Resources Management will retain the central role and the overall

authority in this respect. As such, the Office will build on the monitoring mechanisms described in paragraph 8 above.

12. Future monitoring activities will focus on three levels of relationships in human resource management, as follows:

(a) **Within the Office of Human Resources Management** — Monitoring initiatives will strengthen the human resources functions for which the Office is responsible, by coordinating monitoring activities throughout the Office and creating a technical resource and base for assistance;

(b) **With departments and offices** — The Office of Human Resources Management will identify the activities to be carried out centrally, as opposed to those that can be monitored by the departments and offices themselves, with appropriate reporting structures and schedules, as well as those areas that would be best served by joint monitoring;

(c) **Within the departments and offices of the Secretariat** — The Office of Human Resources Management will assist in capacity-building for monitoring by providing tools, training, technical assistance, advisory services and guidance.

13. While monitoring of human resources management activities has heretofore focused mainly on procedures, the new monitoring system is intended to support a strategic approach as well. As indicated in the guiding principles for human resources management monitoring outlined in paragraph 7 above, the new monitoring concept aims to improve management practices and to achieve better results and greater impact in the work programme of the Organization. The provision of relevant management information, early warning signals of potential improprieties and provision of guidance where needed will not only allow for remedial action, but will also help to disseminate lessons learned and best practices and provide recognition for achievements in human resources management activities throughout the United Nations.

14. To identify opportunities for corrective action, monitoring activities will aim not only at preventing irregularities, but also at finding patterns of non-compliance, with particular emphasis on the procedures or processes which led to them, thus allowing for the identification of emerging trends in order to devise preventive action, in addition to correction or amendment. By monitoring the application of regulations and rules, it will also be possible to determine their continuing relevance and to initiate changes and adjustments as necessary.

15. Where monitoring reveals serious shortcomings or substantial inability to perform delegated authority, the Office of Human Resources Management will require corrective action, which may include withdrawal of that authority, until such time as remedial action has been taken or the necessary capacity of the department or office concerned has been restored.

B. Methodology

16. The human resources management monitoring activities under development are based on the guiding principles listed in paragraph 7 above, and include the following methodological aspects:

(a) **Coverage** — All areas of human resource management will be monitored. Particular attention will be given, however, to areas where authority has been delegated to the head of department or office and areas regulated by legislative mandates (such as geography and gender). Areas of activity that are central to achieving the Secretary-General's reform initiatives, activities for which high monetary values expose the Organization to risk of significant losses and activities which have been the subject of audit observations or management concerns will be selected for regular review. Sampling methods will be used to select specific areas that are representative of a group of activities being carried out;

(b) **Periodicity** — Tracking human resource management data will be an ongoing activity, coupled with periodic reviews of specific areas that are sensitive in nature, or that are particularly significant to completing the Organization's programme of work. This will ensure that all areas are monitored, and that areas of particular concern receive additional attention;

(c) **Standards, norms and targets** — A standard, norm or target for each area to be monitored will be established and recorded. It could be an output in terms of numbers or time required to complete the task. Some norms will relate to the provisions of the staff regulations and rules and the Secretary-General's bulletins and administrative instructions. Vacancy rates, geographical distribution, gender representation statistics, recruitment timelines, timelines for processing entitlements and performance appraisal data are all examples of indicators that can be measured and monitored;

(d) **Recording and analysis of observations and findings** — The Office of Human Resources Management will record its observations and findings to register how the departments and offices performed functions being monitored in comparison with pre-established standards, norms or targets. The effects of the action taken with regard to compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures will also be noted, as well as the impact on the Organization and the staff. Specific analyses will be compared to observations and findings in other departments and offices, or against Secretariat-wide benchmarks. This will assist in establishing benchmarks, determining lessons learned and identifying best practices;

(e) **Recommendations** — Based on its analyses, the Office of Human Resources Management will make its recommendations to heads of departments and offices on action to be taken. Recommendations are intended, inter alia, to provide feedback to heads of departments and offices, to help ensure compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures, to identify appropriate remedial action where lapses may have occurred, to alert managers to the need for resource adjustments, or changes in working methods, to promote effective management and to identify and recognize progress and success in human resources management activities;

(f) **Reporting** — The Office of Human Resources Management is developing a reporting capacity for its monitoring responsibilities. The Office will prepare annual reports to the Secretary-General as part of the efforts of the Department of Management to provide executive management information.

C. Mechanisms and tools

17. Effective monitoring of human resources management requires clear and transparent procedures and adequate mechanisms and tools. The following mechanisms and tools will be added to those already in use, as reported in section IV above:

(a) **Reporting practices and tools** — The installation of IMIS has significantly standardized and improved human resources procedures and processes on a worldwide basis. For monitoring purposes, IMIS is a powerful tool to provide baseline data for management decisions, timelines for delivery of administrative actions and systematic reports on specific issues (such as, the use of retirees, consultants and interns and exception reports). This data can be used in an integrated way to perform comparative analyses of outputs against pre-established indicators, benchmarks, standards, norms and targets. They provide vital elements to measure the quality of outputs, timeliness of delivery and compliance with regulations, rules, policies and procedures. Progress can be reported with regard to online access to available current information for a number of basic and strategic human resources data, some of which is being published on a human resources Intranet site. Further advances are being introduced, such as e-PAS, developed to strengthen the performance management system, and the Galaxy e-staffing system, developed as automated support to the staff selection system;

(b) **Review missions** — Periodic on-site visits to offices away from Headquarters and field missions are essential for effective monitoring. Operating in real situations, these monitoring activities, through the sampling and analysis of typical management actions and discussions with local human resource officers, line managers and staff, can provide departments and offices with the support they need to improve the management of their human resources. In addition, review missions can be conducted as part of a wider management review, in conjunction with other offices of the Secretariat with management, consulting or advisory roles and responsibilities. A productive mission of this kind requires that staff spend extensive periods of time in planning, preparation and follow-up, in addition to the time spent on the visit itself. This includes data collection, advance agreement on areas and activities to be covered and interview scheduling. Following the visit, mission reporting is essential, in particular on lessons learned, as well as to document required follow-up actions;

(c) **Monitoring focal points** — Monitoring is a shared responsibility and an integral part of the functions of all departments and offices. Executive or administrative officers of departments and offices at Headquarters, as well as from the offices of the heads of human resources away from Headquarters, will constitute the liaison structure for human resources management monitoring activities;

(d) **Provision of monitoring tools to departments and offices** — In addition to training, the Office of Human Resources Management will provide monitoring tools to departments and offices to use in support of their human resources management activities. These tools include the IMIS reporting applications, baseline data, benchmarks and performance indicators and ad hoc and standard monitoring reports. The Office of Human Resources Management is designing monitoring guidelines and templates to assist departments and offices with self-monitoring activities and in providing feedback and reports;

(e) **Other mechanisms** — Staff-management consultations and regular interdepartmental and office consultative mechanisms can also provide useful information for monitoring purposes. In addition, with a view to self-monitoring, the Office of Human Resources Management intends to apply the available monitoring mechanisms and tools to the assessment of its own work. All these activities will promote cross-checking and verification of monitoring data.

VI. Implementation

18. Successful monitoring can only be achieved if it is incorporated into all aspects of human resources management. It requires dedicated resources, a specialized team with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience and the definition of a clear programme of work.

19. Given that monitoring activities are being developed concurrently with other major human resources management mandates and initiatives, they are by necessity being implemented using a phased approach. In its initial phase, implementation will draw to the extent possible from existing resources and expertise in the Office of Human Resources Management. Some staff and other resources are being gradually redirected to monitoring activities as they become available, due to ongoing process and rule simplification work, additional automation and expanded delegation of authority. As monitoring activities are further developed, in order to ensure full coverage and to provide the necessary services envisaged, some additional resources may be required. When sufficient resources are available, monitoring responsibilities will be incorporated into the official organizational design documentation of the Office of Human Resources Management and into the job descriptions and annual work plans of selected staff of the Office.

VII. Conclusion

20. **The present report provides the General Assembly with a concise description of human resources management monitoring activities in the Office of Human Resources Management and throughout the Secretariat. It contains a definition of monitoring, an explanation of the relevant guiding principles, a description of existing monitoring mechanisms and a strategy for further development. It is the intention of the Secretary-General to continue current monitoring activities within the constraints of available resources and to adjust resources to new functions so as to develop organizational capacity to fully meet the goal of achieving the comprehensive approach for monitoring described herein.**

21. **The Secretary-General recommends to the General Assembly that it take note of the present report and endorse the approach to developing a more robust monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management.**

Annex

Precis of monitoring decisions of the General Assembly

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999, section II, paragraph 1, reiterated the role, authority and responsibility of the Office of Human Resources Management in establishing human resources policies and guidelines, as well as in ensuring compliance throughout the Secretariat. In paragraph 2, the Assembly decided that the Office of Human Resources Management shall remain the central authority for monitoring, and approval of the recruitment and placement of staff for the interpretation of the regulations and rules of the Organization as they relate to human resources management and their enforcement.

2. In section IV, paragraph 2, of the same resolution the Assembly noted the intention of the Secretary-General to streamline administrative procedures further and to eliminate duplication in relation to human resources management through the delegation of authority to programme managers. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure, before delegating such authority, that well-designed mechanisms of accountability, including the necessary internal monitoring and control procedures, as well as training, were put in place.

3. In his reports A/55/253 and A/55/270, dated 1 and 3 August 2000, respectively, the Secretary-General provided an overview of the mechanisms of accountability, the internal monitoring and control procedures and the necessary training that have already been put in place, in response to the Assembly's request. In A/55/270, the Secretary-General set out a comprehensive human resource management implementation programme, including the 10 building blocks for human resources management reform in the Secretariat, for the approval of the Assembly. In the context of each aspect of human resource management reform, the report addressed issues of accountability and the mechanisms needed to underpin the delegation of authority in human resources management.

4. In its resolution 55/258 of 14 June 2001, the Assembly took specific action in support of the Secretary-General's initiatives for reform, as contained in document A/55/253. In section VII, paragraph 4, the Assembly emphasized that any delegation of authority should be in accordance with the Charter and the regulations and rules of the United Nations, and should entail clear lines of authority and accountability. The Assembly reiterated the central role played by the Office of Human Resources Management in setting the policies and guidelines in respect of the human resources management of the Organization, and monitoring their observance and implementation.

5. In paragraph 10 of the same resolution, the Assembly decided to consider further the issue of a robust monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management to monitor all relevant activities in the Secretariat, regardless of the source of their funding. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide an analytical and thorough report on the issue to the General Assembly.